Our Prime Minister conveyed India's readiness to render all possible assistance to Nepal for accelerating economic rehabilitation and development, in accordance with the priorities and wishes of the Government of Nepal. Government of India, *inter alia,* expressed its willingness to expedite progress on long-term mega infrastructure projects, extend immediately a one-time grant of Rs. 100 crores to the budget of Government of Nepal, offered a soft credit line of US $ 100 million for the execution of infrastructure development projects, enhancement of its 'Aid to Nepal' budget for the current financial year from 65 crore to Rs. 150 crore and waive the dues outstanding as on June 9,2006 owed by the Government of Nepal to the Government of India on account of defence purchases.

Foreign Secretary's visit to Tokyo

318. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the topics discussed between Governments of India and Japan in June last when India's Foreign Secretary visited Tokyo;

(b) the decisions arrived at as a result of the discussions; and

(c) the follow up action, if any, so far taken by the two Governments thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) There was no visit by the Foreign Secretary to Tokyo in June.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

SCO and CICA summits

319. SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the newly emerged Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) and the Conference on Interaction and the four-years old Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) have potential to emerge as effective forum of countries in the Asia region;

(b) the declared objective of the SCO and the details of heads of countries invited/attended the summit meeting held last month in Shanghai;

(c) the perception of Government about SCO and CICA which held its second summit meeting of the heads of the member States last month at Almaty, Kazakhstan; and

(d) the reasons for Prime Minister avoiding the two summit meetings?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The declared objectives of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) are:

(i) Strengthening mutual trust and good-neighbourly relations among member States;

(ii) Promoting their effective cooperation in political affairs, economy and trade, scientific-technical, cultural and educational spheres as in energy, transportation, tourism, and environment protection fields;

(iii) Joint safeguarding and preserving of regional peace, security and stability;

(iv) Striving towards creation of democratic, just, reasonable new international political and economic order.

The following attended the SCO Summit held in Shanghai on 15 June, 2006:

(i) Hu Jintao-President of China;

(ii) Vladimir Putin-President of Russia;

(iii) Nursultan Nazarbayev-President of Kazakhstan;

(iv) Islam Karimov-President of Uzbekistan;

(v) E. Rahmonov-President of Tajikstan;

(vi) K.Bakiev-President of Kyrgyz Republic;

(vii) Pervez Musharraf-President of Pakistan;

(viii) Mahmoud Ahmedinejad-President of Iran;

(ix) N. Enkhbayar-President of Mongolia.

Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India, was not able to attend the SCO and CICA Summits due to domestic pre-occupations and India was represented by Shri Murli Deora, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Government is of the view that:

SCO provides an opportunity for India to cooperate with members and observers to increase economic interaction, cultural exchanges and work jointly on counter-terrorism and against illegal trafficking of narcotics;

CICA can help contribute to the development of a cooperative and pluralistic security order in Asia, based on mutual understanding, trust and sovereign equality. CICA also offers the possibility of having a comprehensive structure of economic cooperation linking various parts of Asia which are developing at different rates.

Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan

320. SHRI TARLOCHAN SINGH: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Hindus and Sikhs that have left Afghanistan due to unrest;

(b) the number of them in India; and

(c) the number of Hindus and Sikhs that are still in Afghanistan?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) It is estimated that before the conflicts and civil strife in the 1990s, Afghanistan's Hindu and Sikh population was over 200,000. Since no census has been conducted in Afghanistan after 2001, exact figure of Hindus and Sikhs in Afghanistan is not available. However, it is estimated that the present size of Afghan Sikh and Hindu community is around 3000. Information regarding number of Hindus and Sikhs who have left Afghanistan and have come to India is not available.